

Dear Public Works Committee Members,

This letter is in response to your request for comments about the upcoming closing of Lincoln Avenue. I believe that a comprehensive system of incentives and disincentives has not been tried before restoring to a physical closing of Lincoln Avenue. UMass commuters who currently use Lincoln Avenue will voluntarily choose another route if the travel time and conditions are better than the route down Lincoln Avenue.

Incentives could include making improvements to the traffic patterns and light timing at two intersections near the University: University Drive/Amity Street and Triangle Street/North Pleasant Street. Currently, left turning traffic has the potential to slow progress to the point where only one or two cars make it through in a cycle. Traffic backs up and a commute along the major roads into UMass looks less appealing than a trip down Lincoln Avenue. Improving student walkways across major UMass streets such as Massachusetts Avenue could improve traffic flow within UMass, and encourage commuters to travel in and out of the desired routes.

In addition to providing fast and convenient alternative routes, there are many other options for discouraging traffic on Lincoln Avenue other than physically closing off the street. For example,

- Put a stop sign at every cross street on Lincoln Avenue, thereby requiring that a car stop every few hundred feet
- Lower the speed limit to 15 MPH
- Increase police speed traps or install speed cameras to automatically ticket speeders
- Leave Lincoln Avenue pothole-ridden to slow traffic

The town has asked for comments from its citizens. The Amherst Chamber of Commerce should also weigh in on the impact of the street closing. Two UMass employees who don't live in Amherst told me that if Lincoln Avenue is closed, it will be too inconvenient to shop or eat in downtown Amherst. Maybe they are the only two that feel that way; maybe not. The Chamber needs to assess the impact of the street closing on Amherst businesses before the closing is approved.

Currently it appears that an increase in traffic is a justifiable basis for street closures. If the town decides to go ahead with the closing, it needs to clearly articulate why Lincoln Avenue is a unique situation. Otherwise other residents will be in line to have their street closed to through traffic. For example, when I moved into my house in 1983, the traffic on Wildflower Drive was non-existent. Now there are hundreds of cars as well as construction vehicles and town recycling trucks using Wildflower Drive and Larkspur Drive as a speedway every day. Given the unexpected increase – which will only increase as Amherst Hills gets developed – why shouldn't Wildflower Drive also be closed to through traffic?

Thank you for considering alternatives to closing Lincoln Avenue and to improving other access roads to UMass.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Jackson